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New project aims to transform the 'first five days' of school

Posted By [Dennis Pierce](#) On July 19, 2012 @ 11:57 am In [Building Learning Communities](#), [eClassroom News](#), [Featured Building Learning Communities](#), [Research](#), [School Administration](#), [School Reform News](#), [Top News](#) | [No Comments](#)



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The First Five Days project aims to start an international conversation about how to make the start of the school year the best it can be.

While there is general agreement that the first five days of school are "absolutely essential" for establishing a culture of learning that will set the right tone for the rest of the year, there is very little research or discussion about how to make these first five days the most relevant and productive they can be, said ed-tech thought leader Alan November.

Kicking off his [Building Learning Communities](#) ^[2] (BLC) conference in Boston July 18, November announced a new project to change that. Called "First Five Days," the project aims to start an international conversation about how to make the start of the school year the best it can be, to foster the greatest chance for success.

November invited educators to share their ideas and experiences on the online professional development community created by his consulting firm, November Learning. To participate, go to <http://blc.vxcommunity.com> ^[3], click on "Register," then click on the "Five" tab.

There is also a new Twitter hashtag, #1st5Days, that educators can use to share their ideas via the popular micro-blogging service.

In announcing the project, November introduced Greg Whitby, executive director of schools for the Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta, Australia, who discussed why the project is important to him.

"What do we currently do in the first five days of school? It's usually about control, organization, and administration," Whitby said. "The first thing we do is set the ground rules: This is how you learn. But what if we flip this around?"

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Whitby said he knows a principal whose students look forward to the first day of school, because they realize it will be something special. This educator looks for an initiative with a big impact to challenge or inspire his students on the first day, Whitby said, such as inviting firefighters to come to the school—and fostering a culture of learning by inquiry.

Marco Torres, a teacher, filmmaker, and media coach, showed a film he made during the pre-conference workshops at BLC in which educators shared their best ideas for the first five days of school.

One educator talked about the importance of getting to know each student personally and making a connection that will help nurture deeper learning. Another said she aims to have student feel "fun, safe, and part of a community." A principal from Australia said she has her

students get to know their teacher and make a short, two-minute video about their teacher in the first week of school.

The First Five Days project is about "imagining a different way of doing things," Whitby noted. If you don't get those first few days of school right, "you've bugged the year."

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